

**Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine
State of the Park Report
2003**

Overview/Summary of Progress

Fort McHenry had an outstanding year of events and accomplishments in 2003. Planning is in full force for badly-needed education/administration facility upgrades through the initiation of a Cultural Landscape Report, Alternative Transportation Study, Development Concept Plan and Environmental Assessment. The park received a \$90,000 operating increase for law enforcement, which brought base funding to \$1,688,000. Additional funding from donations, project funds and fee demonstration totalled \$1,140,547. Highlights of the year include the participation of Governor Robert Ehrlich and Baltimore Mayor Martin O'Malley's in the annual Defender's Day program on September 13. Mayor O'Malley was dressed in War of 1812 officer garb, since the park had presented him with an Honorary Colonel award at a Tattoo



Ceremony in July.

Gov. Ehrlich, Supt. Joss and Mayor O'Malley at Fort September 13, 2003 Defender's Day program



Mayor Martin O'Malley speaking to the McHenry Guard at July 13, 2003 Tattoo

Hurricane Isabel (Sept. 18-19, 2003)

Fort McHenry was closed from noon on Sept. 18 through Sept. 19 in compliance with Baltimore Federal Executive Board guidance. The park was used by neighboring agencies (US Army Corps of Engineers, US Naval Reserve and Baltimore City Fireboat Station) as a safe haven for 50 of their vehicles. After the park re-opened, an inspection of park assets identified damage to gutters and downspouts on several buildings within the Star Fort. Four trees within the landscape were destroyed and several damaged. Tree repairs and removals will be performed by park staff or completed as part of tree preservation work under contract for Fort McHenry and Hampton. Park staff have worked since the hurricane to clean up massive amounts of debris which washed up onto the grounds.

Planning

Significant progress was made to launch three major planning studies for the proposed **education/administration facility**, with the production of a 25% draft **Cultural Landscape Report (CLR)** by the Olmsted Center, completion of stakeholder interviews for the **Alternative Transportation Study (ATS)** and early stages of the **Development Concept Plan/Environmental Assessment (DCP/EA)** process. The CLR Landscape Inventory and Condition Assessment were produced with the assistance of an intern funded by Baltimore's Parks and People Foundation. The ATS will be produced by the Department of Transportation's Volpe Center and the DCP/EA by Vanesse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. of Williamsburg, VA. Completion for all three projects has been scheduled for June 2004. As part of the planning and compliance for the facility, a **Determination of Non-Eligibility of the Mission 66 Features of the Park** was prepared and approved by the Maryland State Historic Preservation Office.

Park staff continue to participate and support the on-going work for the **Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail Study**. The final report will be published in the Federal Register in fall of 2003. It is anticipated that legislation for designation will be introduced to Congress in 2004. Supporters of this initiative are hopeful the designation will be announced by the 190th anniversary of the Battle of Baltimore in September 2004.

Park staff also continue to consult with The Smithsonian Institution's team who are working on the **Star-Spangled Banner conservation project** and the museum is hopeful the flag will be back on permanent exhibition by 2006. Associated educational activities are being planned in conjunction with the park.

The final draft of the **Comprehensive Interpretive Plan (CIP)** was completed this year. Interpretive staff began working on action items in November. CIP identified projects were drafted into individual staff annual work plans. The primary focus for projects in FY03 was in the areas of publications and education. Rangers began planning for a War of 1812 park handbook (multi-site), reviewed three site bulletins, heavily revised special program brochures for the Civil War Weekend and Defenders' Day and developed a Tattoo military ceremony brochure.

Superintendent Laura Joss continued to work with regional partners and NPS sites on planning for the **Bicentennial of the War of 1812** which will be celebrated in 2012-2014. After making contact with all other known NPS parks that have themes related to the War of 1812, a table of sites, their association to the War of 1812, and their anniversary planning activities has been compiled. In addition, a list of local, state and regional organizations with a tie to the War of 1812 has been compiled. A list of proposed bicentennial activities has been shared with these partners, and their input has been incorporated.

Resource Stewardship

Substantial work was accomplished on the **Rehabilitation of the Historic Seawall Line Item Construction Project** in 2003. This is being done through the Design/Build process using an innovative technique in which the contractor partnered with an engineering firm to "dewater" the face of the wall using a cofferdam to permit a safe work environment for making repairs to the structure. Extensive masonry stabilization and repair work on approximately 1300 linear feet of the historic seawall and landscaping in the area adjacent to the structure will be completed in 2004. Riprap stone was placed to reduce the impact of storms and regular tidal action on the wall. The hillside adjacent to the Maintenance Area was re-contoured to reduce hydraulic pressure on the structure.

As a NPS **Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network** site, the park continued to work on the **Water Battery Site** grant project awarded in 2002. This project will include expanded living history, new waysides and an exhibit on a major section of the 1814 fort and its associated weapons. This is particularly important due to the role these batteries played in the Battle of Baltimore and the fact that no physical remnants of this feature survive. Draft designs for the interpretive wayside exhibit panels were produced. Construction began with excavation of the site, borings for the piers at load-bearing points and erection of the gun platform framing system. Extremely wet weather in spring and summer soil and compaction issues with the existing fill prevented staff from completing the construction. It is anticipated that the waysides and the Water Battery platform will be completed in spring 2004. This will enable the interpretation of the site where the French naval cannons defended Baltimore's harbor during the British bombardment in 1814.

Numerous **archival projects** were undertaken in the park library in 2003 and will continue in 2004. **Civil War and War of 1812 Soldier Databases** were improved, with the addition of over 10,000 entries and conversion of over 50 **maps, images and documents** into digital format. Two historic **ship models**, over 40 historic **flags**, and two circa **1800 cannon carriages** were sent to Harpers Ferry Conservation Treatment Center for treatment. The park original **French naval gun (1809)** was treated and painted and will be mounted on a newly constructed carriage on the Water Battery site when it is completed.

Partnerships

In 2003, the park continued strong alliances with the **Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network**, the **National Historic Seaport in Baltimore**, and the sailing ships *Pride of Baltimore II* and the *USS Constellation*. Our ongoing partnership with **Living Classrooms – Patriots of Fort McHenry** continued, and they provided the park with over \$14,000 in support for events and educational activities in 2003. The Patriots awarded Governor Robert Ehrlich their 2003 Francis Scott Key Award, and it was accepted by Lieutenant Governor Michael Steele at their annual luncheon cruise in May.

Fort McHenry continues to be active with the **Greater Baltimore History Alliance**, and that group has entered into a partnership with the **Baltimore City Heritage Area (BCHA)** program. BCHA has also

received approval from the Regional Director to have the Northeast Region examine Baltimore's cultural resources and stories to determine whether their national significance merit an expanded partnership with the NPS.

In 2003 the park entered into an exciting partnership with the Maryland State Office of Tourism for the implementation of a grant to develop and publish an **interpretive brochure on the Chesapeake Campaign of the War of 1812**. The brochure was funded through a \$56,000 Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network grant. The task force for this project plan to announce and distribute this new brochure at the 190th Anniversary of the Battle of Baltimore in September 2004.

Park volunteers, partner groups, and maintenance staff worked with the **National Aquarium in Baltimore** to complete six periodic cleanups of the tidal wetlands adjacent to the park. Volunteers contributed approximately 7,020 hours in the field towards resources management of this vital area, and nearly 300 cubic yards (240 tons) of debris was collected. A highlight was the **National Public Lands Day** event in September where employees from Wal-Mart, Unilever, the National Aquarium and community volunteers worked with park staff to conduct clean up recovery efforts from Hurricane Isabel, which had passed through the area the week before. As a participating park in the "National Parks America Tour," a \$3,000 donation check was presented to the park by Wal-Mart, Unilever and the National Park Foundation during the event. Finally, the Baltimore Bird Club continued to record data and band over 610 birds in the wetlands, and worked with the National Aquarium to produce a colorful interpretive brochure for public distribution entitled "Birds of Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine."

Visitor Trends and Satisfaction

A visitor survey conducted in August 2003, indicated that 98% of visitors reported satisfaction with park facilities and services (2003 GPRA goal was 95%). This survey also indicated that 88% of visitors understand and appreciate the significance of FOMC (2003 goal was 65%).

Visitation to the park in Fiscal Year 2003 (608,588 visitors) was almost 11% below FY02 figures. This drop is attributed to the economy, very bad weather through the winter, spring and summer, and the effects of the Baltimore-Washington Sniper on travel in October of 2002. Rain on weekends were a problem as was a one-week closing for snow removal after a record-breaking storm in February. There was also a drop from FY'02 figures that rose after 9/11. This overall visitation decrease is consistent with national and area travel statistics.

Resource Education

In 2003, Ranger staff offered a broad range of interpretive activities focusing on primary park themes. Rangers and park uniformed volunteers offered interpretive programs to 52,000 visitors, and the living history volunteers conducted programs for over 61,000 park visitors, including live blackpowder musket demonstrations, and live firing and artillery drills with the park's 1812 era reproduction cannon. 152,000 visitors enjoyed informal interpretation. Several special tours and programs were given on and off site. The largest was a series of three programs to each of 1200 midshipmen (60 groups for 180 programs) from the U.S. Naval Academy given over a two-day period.

Over 75,000 school children visited the park for educational field trips. This type of visitation continues to concentrate in April, May and early June. The record day this year was 46 buses. Staff is working with the City of Baltimore and other local schools to encourage school visits outside of this peak period. Interpreters initiated discussions to develop a formal partnership with one Baltimore City high school specifically aimed at non-peak season programs.

Work on rehabilitating exhibits in the Star Fort, supported heavily by Fee Demonstration funds, continued this year. The primary focus was on planning, research and design of the D Building Archaeology exhibit (Witness To War). The combination of more accurately furnished rooms and additional interpretive exhibits has greatly improved our ability to tell the story of Fort McHenry's role in the Battle of Baltimore.

Special Events

Annual special events on-site occurred on Living American Flag Day (2,500 schoolchildren), Civil War Weekend (5,700 visitors) and the Star-Spangled Banner/Defender's Day Weekend (6,800 visitors). The annual Flag Day program was cancelled due to rain. The park also held two summer and one fall military Tattoo ceremonies (2600 visitors). The park continued to offer special commemorative talks, wreath layings, and programs for Veteran's Day, Memorial Day and September 11 anniversaries. The park also supported a visit to Baltimore by President Bush in October of 2002.

The Questers of Maryland donated over \$3,000 for the purchase of three replica flags to be used at park special events and ceremonies. These included a 30x42 foot replica of the Star-Spangled Banner, a gold and black replica of the Calvert Flag, and a replica Civil War era flag.

Volunteers

Volunteers-In-Parks (VIPs) contributed 27,125 hours to the park – the equivalent of fourteen full-time staff members. Volunteers are a strongpoint in the park's interpretive and visitor service program. Volunteers gave over 362 programs to the visiting public and helped cover for short staffing levels. This year Visitor services volunteers also assisted park law enforcement personnel in security duties for special events.

One of the park's volunteers, Jim Peters, won the George B. Hartzog award for best individual volunteer in the National Park Service. Jim led a major effort to reestablish a tidal wetland adjacent to the park. He organized volunteers to clean the wetland, trained them to conduct bird monitoring and organized a bird banding station. He also wrote a curriculum that is used by the National Aquarium in Baltimore for educational programs in the marsh. The George B. Hartzog award was presented by Gail Norton, Secretary of the Interior.

The Fort McHenry Guard living history unit expanded by 30% this summer. This summer saw the development of a strong civilian core to interpret social history of the period. By expanding the living history program to cover civilian as well as military roles, the park ensured that personal services reflected multiple themes.

Last year grant monies from the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network enabled the park to purchase living history uniforms and recruit volunteers for the Chesapeake Flotilla unit. This year they completed their training and more volunteers joined. They gave over 50 programs both on-site and at schools, local historical museums and park partner sites around the Chesapeake Bay. The park also conducted a number of safe black powder programs with both small arms and artillery.

Living history volunteers were instrumental in the park's annual hallmark event, "Defenders' Day – A Star-Spangled Weekend." The Honorable Martin O'Malley, **Mayor of Baltimore City joined the Volunteers-In-Parks program** and served in the park's living history unit, the Fort McHenry Guard. He continues to use the park's themes in his speeches around the city and pledged greater civic support for next year's program.

Special Park Uses

Interest in Fort McHenry as an event and filming venue remains high, both locally and nationally. The park issues Special Use Permits to major partner events (the Flag Day Foundation's "Living American Flag" and "Flag Day" celebrations) as well as numerous smaller walkathons, military reenlistment and change of command ceremonies, and performances of the National Anthem by school and professional choral groups. Fort McHenry received very good coverage in local media, and received national coverage in MSNBC.

The **A&E Network History Channel** embarked on an exciting new project with the park to produce a two-hour documentary on the War of 1812, tentatively entitled "1814 Invasion." This film highlights Fort McHenry, and footage for it was shot in the park in September. Park staff and living history volunteers are featured, and assisted the film crew with locations and significant props, such as cannon placement. It is expected to premier in September 2004, and plans are underway for an event featuring Mayor Martin O'Malley, who makes an appearance in the film.

Issues Facing the Park

During the period prior to the Iraq war (spring to summer of 2003) parks, in particular those with symbolic and patriotic value such as Fort McHenry, were again placed on a heightened alert status. Fort McHenry continued to receive law enforcement ranger and US Park Police assistance from several other parks in the Northeast and National Capitol Regions, for special events, including Flag Day and Defenders Day evening celebrations. The park had three smash and grab car clouts in the fall, and local police, citizens and park staff took a highly visible response with increased monitoring and signage. Fort McHenry continues to take security into consideration during routine operations and special events, and was delighted to receive a base increase (Operations Formulation System Request #11460 for \$90,000) for an additional law enforcement position.

Final Note/FY2004 Goals

Fort McHenry Law Enforcement Ranger Rick Apfel (who had just returned from a year of active National Guard duty) was called up to the U.S. Army Reserves for duty in the Middle East up to another year. We were very pleased that Chief of Maintenance Greg McGuire received the servicewide Natural Resources Maintenance Employee of the Year award. It was also appreciated that SCEP employee Josh Reyes was selected to join the servicewide Intake Trainee Program. Superintendent Joss was honored to be presented with the Rotary Foundation of Rotary International's Paul Harris Fellow award by the new Downtown Towson Rotary.

2004 Goals

Complete the Line-Item Construction Rehabilitation of the Historic Seawall Project
Complete the Star Fort Phase II Line Item Construction Project: Repair Architectural Components.
Continue with War of 1812 Bicentennial Planning
Complete the DCP/EA, Boundary Survey, ATP and CLR for the Education/Administration Facility planning
Complete Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network funded Water Battery Project
Complete Chesapeake Campaign of the War of 1812 Brochure with Maryland Office of Tourism Development
Complete Installation of the Archeology Exhibit in E Building with Harpers Ferry Center
Complete parkwide Green Energy Conservation Project
Complete corrective actions